

GOOD TASTE

**The Official Newsletter of the
Thunder Bay Atari ST Enthusiasts**



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CONTENTS

The First 6 Months by Neville Denetto	1
March Meeting by N.D.	1
The Auto Folder by N.D.	1
Magazine Review by N.D.	2
Using a 5.25in. Drive by N.D.	3
Base Two - Review by Doug Stankie	4
F15 Strike Eagle - Review by Ken Ritchie	5
Adventure Corner by Roy Stokes	6
Disk-Of-The-Month by Ed Giertuga	6

THE FIRST SIX MONTHS

APRIL 26TH marks the 6-month milestone for our User Group. It would not be a bad idea to look at this half year that has elapsed, and to look ahead into the future.

Ed Giertuga, Roy Stokes and I talked about this venture in the late summer of 1987. A few enquires revealed that Phil Moorey already had similar ideas because he had obtained a list from MIKADON giving the names of those who had purchased Atari ST's. A meeting was held on OCTOBER 26th, 1987, and those in attendance at that inaugural meeting were: Phil Moorey, Ed Giertuga, Roy Stokes, Jack Devries, George Kamstra, Tom Roberts, and myself. As a result of this meeting, TASTE was formed.

We have achieved quite a bit in this short 6-month period. Our membership now stands at 23; we are well on the way to establishing a healthy Public Domain library; the Disk-Of-the-Month has proved an enormous success, attendance at meetings has been good, and feedback at the meetings has been positive. Equally, the monthly newsletter has been well received, with more members contributing to it. I have successfully modified an IBM-type drive to work with my ST, as also installing a 1Mb memory expansion.

Phil Moorey is actively involved in a project where he will be using the ST for receiving facsimile transmissions via shortwave radio. Ed Giertuga is forging ahead with his interest in

modem communications - he has recently acquired a 9600 baud modem. Doug Stankie has the much talked-about blitter chip in his Mega,,, and so on.

I am sure that several members are involved in projects of which I am unaware. Do come forward and let us know of your interests, and how the Club can serve your needs best. In the final analysis, this indeed is one of the main objectives of a User Group.

LOOKING AHEAD

Given the smaller population base that we have to rely on, we expect the membership to peak at around 30 to 40. I will be working on a hardware project to modify a Panasonic 3.5in. 720k drive for use with an ST. We have to establish a database with information on your equipment, interests, computing objectives etc in order to serve you better. A constitution has to be drawn up. We should get involved more involved with our ST counterparts located near us - Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and possibly Minneapolis.

There is yet a lot to be done. Three or four individuals by themselves cannot do everything; it has to be a collective effort. You would have noticed that there are more contributors this month; this is definitely a good sign; we would like to see more names in the Contents list.

Do help us and the fellow members of our User Group by participating actively..

Neville Denetto

Next Meeting
Wednesday, April 27th
7.30 pm
Confederation College Hangar
Publishing Partner Demo
Using a 5.25 in. drive with the ST
and more.....

The March Meeting

It was good to see a few new faces at this meeting, and to get 3 new members to join our Group. The PD item on the agenda was well received, as also the disk-of-the-month presentation.

Elaine Burton, from Mikadon, provided a great deal of useful information regarding software in general, and musical programs in particular. We were given copies of music-related software lists, and a general overview of what is available in terms of software of all kinds. Several members came forward with their particular requirements and inclinations. We are looking forward to hearing from her when she return from her trip to Toronto, Montreal, and a few other places.

My apologies for The Publishing Partner demo goof up. I had forgotten that double-sided disks do not run very well on a single-sided drive! As a result, this demo had to be put on hold. Ed Gierluga came to the rescue with a demo of Pinball Construction Set; this was watched with avid interest. As one of the members remarked, it was difficult to judge which was more fun to watch: playing the game, or watching the computer set up the various pieces.

Sales were brisk for both the disk of the month and the PD domain disk-based lists. Also brand name disks were made available for members at \$17.00 per box of 10.

The meeting adjourned at 9.45 pm. *N.D.*

THE AUTO FOLDER

by Neville Denetto

Last month, you were introduced to the operation of the AUTO folder. It was stated that files with the extender .PRG would automatically run if placed in such a folder. This would be OK provided the program was written for a low resolution screen; this is the default parameter for a colour monitor. A different approach has to be taken for medium resolution files.

Essentially, the ST runs all files (whose names end in .PRG) in the order in which they were saved to the auto folder. The time (to the nearest minute) is shown on the directory listing.

Suppose that your program requires medium resolution to be set before running. This presents a problem because the ST executes the .PRG files in the AUTO folder before it looks for the DESKTOP.INF file to see what resolution you want to power up. The ST defaults to low resolution on colour systems. That's where the problem lies.

The solution is to first save a PD program called MEDREZ.PRG to the auto folder and then save your FILENAME.PRG. The system will now set the machine to medium resolution and then run FILENAME.PRG. Everything will work out fine provided (and here is the second catch) that

your program is a NON-GEM file.

Getting around this hurdle needs that a second PD program called STARTGEM.PRG also be placed in the AUTO folder. Again, this program must be added before your FILENAME.PRG is saved to the AUTO folder. Summarising:

To run a medium resolution GEM file from the auto folder build up your AUTO folder in the following sequence:

1. MEDREZ.PRG
2. STARTGEM.PRG
3. FILENAME.PRG

NOTE: 1. Both MEDREZ.PRG and STARTGEM.PRG will be available on **NEXT** month's disk-of-the-month.

2. Sometimes you can rename a .TOS file to have a .PRG extender and make it work from the auto folder. Don't do the same outside the AUTO folder or some strange things may happen.

Ref: 'By The Numbers', by Don Smith, *ST Express*, February 1988, pp.24/25. **OT**



MAGAZINE REVIEW

- A review of the
ATARI ST USER
(Published in the UK)

This is an overview of the British Magazine called the ATARI ST USER, which calls itself 'the top-selling Atari ST Magazine'. My thanks to Doug Orlowski for making the magazine available. ...reviewed by Neville Denetto

I am looking at a really glossy presentation here, printed in full colour on thick art paper. The 82 pages that make up the February 1988 edition are full of useful information of different kinds.

The Index consists of four main sections: FEATURES, GAME, REVIEWS, and PROGRAMMING.

FEATURES

NEWS: news of the latest in the ST world plus two pages describing the latest games.

SHOW REPORT: ...on the recent Atari show held in London...and the COMDEX show (USA).

USER PORT: using this port on the ST.

PRINTER DRIVERS: creating a driver that will print foreign characters.

ADVENTURES: reviews, hints and tips regarding several adventures including ZORK III, STATIONFALL, GUILD OF THIEVES, KNIGHT ORC, KING'S QUEST III, LEATHER GODDESSES, BUREAUCRACY, BALLYHOO, and THE LURKING HORROR. It does appear that adventure programs have a very big following in the UK. Many of the tips were short cuts to getting such 'goodies' as unlimited lives, opening doors that normally are difficult to get through etc etc.

GAME:

SLIDING TILES: A type-in program (in Fast Basic) which allows you to create sliding block puzzles using Degas or Neochrome pictures.

REVIEWS:

WORD PROCESSORS: A comparison of Kuma's K-Word 2 and Abacus' Text Pro.

DESKTOP PUBLISHING: Fleet Street Publisher version 1.1

FORTTRAN: 'Fortran for Gem'

QUICK PEEKS: Brief reviews of three programs: Las Vegas, Airball Construction Kit, and Hollywood Poker.

SOFTWARE: This is by far the largest section in the magazine. Seven programs were covered with a fair amount of detail, complete with full colour screens etc.: Star Trek, Blue War, Academy, Grand Prix 500, DeJa Vu, Phoenix, & Indiana Jones.

PROGRAMMING:

MACHINE CODE: machine language programming, a tutorial.

FUNCTION KEYS: an accessory that helps you to define the 'Alternate' key. It has to be compiled etc. in order to make it useful.

You can see that there is something for everybody in the 'Atari ST User'. with software reviews being dominant.

As far as advertising is concerned, there is an abundance of products available to the reader. While software prices were cheaper, for the most part, when compared to Canadian prices, most of the hardware is expensive.

An annual subscription by air would set you back by P38.00 (P-pound-\$2.35 Can.). Contact: Database Publishing Ltd., Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 5NP, UK

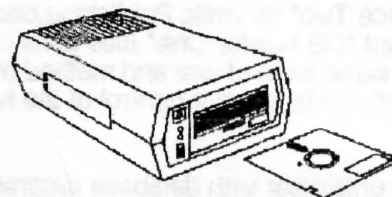
Now for some excerpts from the magazine:

- a budget-priced hard disk drive has been announced by Silicon Systems. Prices start at P549 for the 20Mb unit and P799 for the 40Mb version... they expect to have a 300Mb unit ready by March.
- a 5.25 floppy disk said to be fully compatible with PC-Ditto is priced at P143.
- despite reassurances from Atari regarding upward compatibility of the new ST operating system - TOS 1.09 - some software developers remain unconvinced...
- Atari was the undisputed star of the Comdex Show in America, capturing the Las Vegas limelight with its Afaq supermicro....
- when the final Christmas sales figures are in, they will most certainly show the ST in number one spot at a major department store (Dixons).
- Atari has announced that it is to pull out of FAST - the Federation Against Software Theft. An Atari spokesman said, "The reason for leaving is that we are mainly a hardware manufacturer...."
- building on the success of its budget disk range for 8-bit machines, Firebird Software has

turned its attention to low-price games for the ST. First titles in the P9.95 series are Warhawk, Harvey Headbanger and I-Ball.

- latest release from Martech is a vast combat arcade adventure called Catch 23. Its advanced 3D vector graphics will enhance the action on a highly dangerous island.....price P19.95

Until next month, then, happy computing, and do keep in touch..... Neville GT

**USING A 5.25 INCH DRIVE**

by Neville Denetto

From the time that I knew that the ST could emulate an IMB, I was intrigued with the idea of installing a readily available 5.25 inch unit with the ST. Finally, after a couple of months of work (mostly getting the bits and pieces together), I was ready to fire up the system. After a few hisheartening screen displays such as 'Drive B is not responding' etc I was able to do all the things that I hoped was possible like:

- running many IBM programs, using PC ditto
- doing away with ram disks, as far as possible
- the convenience of having a second drive

For me personally, the biggest thrill that I got out of the system was taking a disk from work with text files on it and displaying it directly on the ST screen *without using PC Ditto*. I was easily able to load these files into either WordWriter2 or Word Perfect. There they were for me to do as I pleased; no fuss or bother of any kind.

I was also able to transfer several of my older programs, back-up text files etc into 5.25 inch disks, thereby releasing nearly 40 higher priced 3.5in dists in the process. All your PD library programs are going to be stored in this format, to cut costs.

I put the system together using the following components:

1. A second-hand Tandon 160 Kb, 40-track double-sided drive.
2. A used power supply
3. A NEW (you don't believe this do you?) connecting cable from E.Arthur Brown.

The total cost to me was \$229 Can. It is a no-frills system; the power supply is exposed, as also is part of the disk drive! A new system could be assembled together for around \$300.00.

If you need more information, do not hesitate to contact me at 577-1061.



BASE TWO

A Review by:
Doug Stankey

When choosing a database program, the choices can be bewildering. I needed something that was not outrageously expensive, not too complicated to use, and preferably had the same data format as "DB Master One" (to avoid having to re-type a lot of data!) I selected "Base Two" by Antic Publishing because of its ability to adapt "DB Master One" files to its own format, and had the same ease of use and method of setting up fields but with vastly greater control of the report structure.

To those unfamiliar with database programs, the idea is to be able to store information in such a manner that you can have the computer look up all items having to do with something that your interested in. For example, I have a database of my book inventory with information on titles, etc., and what the books are about and where I've stored them. Thus, if I want a list of all books dealing with a particular subject, such as Canadian aircraft of the 1940s, then I can have that printed out with no difficulty.

To create a data base, you must first have a database program. You then must create a file dealing with the items of interest, each of which is described in a "form" called a "record". Each record may have some number of labelled areas called "fields" into which your information is put. You the user must define the form or layout of the "record" in terms of: the number of fields, the names of the fields, and the sizes of the fields. Once this is done you can start to input the information that you are trying to manage.

Entering data into Base Two records is easy. To call up a "blank" form (ie: record) you press "<control> A". The cursor will place itself in the first field and then you just type in what you want for that field, press "RETURN" and it advances to the next field, and so on.

If at any point you want to change something within a record, to correct a mistake for example, all you need to do is use the mouse pointer to place the cursor at the spot where you wish to edit and then just go ahead. To complete the record, just press "<control> A" again and the form is now incorporated into the database, as well as a new blank being presented to the screen.

Once you have established a database, the next step is to use it, ie: get information out. There are two ways of doing this. The first is to ask the database (DB) program directly for something. For example, if I wanted to find the inventory numbers of all my books that were authored by John Keegan, I would use the "find" icon and indicate to look for all records with the substring "Keegan" in the "Author" field. I might be more selective and add another condition, such as the book must deal with tanks and so look for "tank" in the "Keyword" field as well. "Base Two" allows up to

three levels of inclusive conditions. Asking the program directly results in each appropriate record to be displayed to the screen, one at a time, for your perusal. The other way to get information output is to define a report.

A report is a more elaborated way of extracting information. It requires that you define what sort of information you want, usually by use of keywords or numbers in some sort of combination. This is very similar to the direct searches mentioned above. Also you must define the layout of the report, in other words how it will appear as it is being printed out. This means you indicate what fields will appear where on the printout and how big each will be. You can also define headers and label fields to help identify what the printed out data refers to. The report form can have multiple or single lines per record of data, up to an entire page in the case of "Base Two". The layout and selection of data fields can be totally independent of the layout of the record "form" defined for inputting data. You can design about eight reports and save them to disk. With Base Two you may print a report to the screen for a preview of how it will appear then go back and edit it. You can, of course, print a report to printer or to a disk file. The advantage of a disk file is that you can then edit the output even further before printing or perhaps incorporate the information into another document.

Base Two allows the user to define some of the fields to contain equations using other fields within the record as variables. This gives it some of the abilities of a spread sheet although much more limited, but has the advantage that the order of the records as entered is irrelevant and you can pick out the appropriate records for the calculation. For example, I have used this feature to keep track of the Bi-Level commuter rail car's weight changes. Each weight and centre of gravity change was kept on a separate record.

There were three sets of change calculations and the applicability of each was flagged by a keyword field. The reports would be edited to select the correct sets of data and do the calculations within each record, then total up the aggregates for the lot. Not only did this save much arithmetic and error, but since there have been many changes in the meantime I easily changed the appropriate records and re-did the calculation in no time at all.

There should be a distinction between "filing" type data base programs like "Base Two" and "Zoomracks" and "relational" data base programs, like "DBman". These are much more complicated to use and much more expensive. The feature of these programs is that they can tap into other data base files to search for data requested and not just from a single data file. For instance, to do weight estimations for rail vehicles I needed a way of recording part weights by part number along with miscellaneous data. But to do estimation calculations one also needs to record the quantities of each part involved in each and every assembly. Thus a second file is required to record the bill of materials for each assembly where each part weight is called up by part number. Also, assemblies

can be made of other assemblies which complicates matters further. Clearly a filing program is insufficient.

A relational database program would link together data from several files, something that most private users don't really have a need for.

To sum up, I've found that a program like Base Two to be extremely useful for private use if you have to track quantities of items. It can be applied to mailing lists, inventories, indices, accounting, and who knows what else. I consider it to be the second most useful application (after word processing) of the personal computer.



"F-15 STRIKE EAGLE"

The "F-15 STRIKE EAGLE" is a program by MICROPROSE. It is a shoot em up flight simulation game that puts you in the role of a F-15 pilot on a variety of missions. The missions you may be sent on are quite diverse, everything from strike missions in the Persian Gulf to attacking Hanoi. You may even find yourself an Israeli pilot fighting in a Mid-East conflict.

Now just because I referred to F-15 as a shoot em up don't believe it won't require any thinking on your part, it will as well as calling for good hand eye coordination.

First off you are going to have to learn to fly the F-15 Strike Eagle, now in the words of author Douglas Adams "Don't Panic". The hardest part of flying has already been done away with you don't have to take off you start already in the air and you do not have to land just buzz the landing field or aircraft carrier at about 3000 to 4000 feet that is sufficient to end the mission. Now even though the hardest parts have been done for you don't get overconfident I found out to my horror just how fast an F-15 can bury itself into the ground at 100% power. You can even tear the plane apart in mid-air by flying faster than the designers intended it to go. on the plus side you do get a warning on your HUD (heads up display) telling you you're in trouble (the canopy border goes red). On the down side you have less than 2 seconds to apply your air brakes or pull back hard on the joy stick, you must get your air speed down fast. Remember out flying the aircraft can happen any time you are in a dive at 100% power and be especially cautious when you are using your Afterburners.

You can conserve fuel by flying at less than 100% power. The F-15 is capable of staying air-born at 55% power, your lowest setting, however at 55% you are near stall speed so any attempt to dog fight other jets and you will quickly find yourself in a stall.

Fuel is a major problem, and all high performance jets eat fuel at an exorbitant rate. Unlike real life this program has no inflight fueling option. The way I found to get around this is to go to 55% power and then hit your Afterburners, you can now fly at maximum speed and only use fuel at your lowest rpm. setting thus conserving fuel and increasing your range. There is however one problem while using this method, multiple computer commands can sometimes send your F-15 into a screaming dive. The only way out of this dive that I can find is to punch 100% power and pull back on the joy stick. Despite sounding complicated I'm sure everyone will find the F-15 easy to fly.

I have a tendency to develop verbal diarrhea when talking about things military so I'll try my best to keep the discription of the weapons system brief. The F-15 has four offensive weapons systems the first of which is its' GUN a M-61A1 six barreled 20mm rotary cannon handy for close in work on other aircraft, next we have the ever popular AIM-9L Side-winder missiles these heat-seeking little beauties give you a bit more reach than you have with GUNS and they will even chase the bad guys for a bit while you do other things. The AIM-7F Sparrows by Raytheon/General Dynamics have got to be the Cadillac of missiles, with its' radar guidance and 50km range you can KO your opponent before he can even think of touching you. Finally we come to your bombs, you have 18 500-lb MK-82 low-drag general purpose bombs bundled in six groups of threes.

To aim your GUNS use the cross hairs on the canopy, missiles are easy as soon as you arm them, your H.U.D. tracks all aircraft in range, they lock on and you let em go. When you arm your bombs a bomb sight appears on your canopy, for best results try to drop them under 6000ft..

All the time you are trying to get to your target the enemy will be trying to stop you. To warn you of these threats you have a long, medium and short range radar as well as a few other goodies. Just below your H.U.D. is your Threat Display in the form of four letters I,R,A,F,. The I will turn red if you have a weapon with a infra red targeting system locked on if this occurs drop a flare to confuse it. If the R turns red you have a missile incoming that has locked on to you with radar, to confuse it use your electronic counter measures (this is both electronic and chaff being dropped). Of course you can also try turning inside the missile, all missiles have a large turning radius, a good pilot can out fly one. The last two warning lights are A, your altitude is dangerously low, and F, your fuel is likewise low.

On your H.U.D. you will also get written warning of enemy aircraft launch, air to air missile launch and S.A.M. (surface to air missile) launch.

As you can see F-15 STRIKE EAGLE is a shoot-em-up but with a bit more.

P.S. Happy flying but watch out for SAM

K.A.Ritchie



DISK OF THE MONTH

In the April disk of the month all the programs have one thing in common, in that they are all written in compiled GFA basic.

On this disk you will find 3 very enjoyable games and for those who don't have one, a data base program. Following is the listing of programs to be found on the April disk of the month:

DHANDLER\DHANDLER.PRG- This is a data base written in compiled GFA basic. I have tested it in the medium res mode and it seems to work fine. You will find instructions for using this program in the readme.doc file in this same folder. So if you don't have a data base program or you would like to try another then this program may be for you.

MONOPOLY\MONOPLOW.PRG- This game is based on the board game that I am sure we have all played. This program works in the low res mode. The graphics are very well done and I am sure anyone who enjoyed the board game will enjoy this computer version as well.

WHEELFOR.TNE\WHEELLOW.PRG- This game program is based on the TV game show "wheel of fortune" and plays in much the same way. Spin the wheel and try to guess the phrases in various categories by picking letters and buying vowels. This game is for 2 to 3 players in the low res mode.

YAHTZEE\YAHTZMED.PRG- Here we have yet another board game which has been transferred over to the computer format. If you know how to play yahtzee then you will be able to play this program.

I feel that all these programs are very well done, all the games make good use of graphics and are true to the originals that they have been derived from. The data base is also well done, it may be more simple than some commercial data base programs but still should be more than adequate for many applications. Also for those who may be considering the purchase of GFA basic these programs will serve as examples of what can be done with this programming language.

Disk of the month Price is \$4.00. The disk will be available at our next meeting Wednesday, April 27th and will be demonstrated at that time.

E. Gierluga

THE ADVENTURE CORNER

By Roy Stokes

Title: DUNGEON MASTER

Distributor: FTL Games

Machine: 520 or 1040 ST - Colour monitor suggested

If 'Beyond Zork' is the ultimate in text adventures presently in our machines, then, 'DUNGEON MASTER' must be considered as the best graphics adventure to come along for a long time.

I think this program is the one that those of you who would like to try adventures, should try - and those of you who do play adventures, will love. The game plays well and is not too difficult (after one week of play, I am now at the third level of the dungeon).

Documentation is good - you should read all of it, as it does contain information you will need in order to play well. Loading does take a while because more than one megabyte of information is compressed into the game disk. You will need a blank disk for saving your position from time to time.

The game is played with the mouse - no text input is needed. You can manipulate items almost as you would in real life. You really must imagine that you are there doing what ever you think you would do. Also, the game does play in real time, so you will see and experience things happening as time goes by.

The point of the game? ... Find the 'FIRESTAFF'.

I really cannot tell you much more as I am still playing away at the game - it is fun, but, it is not simple!

Author's Note: If you are an 'Adventurer' and feel this format of presenting information is not to your taste, please let me know about your ideas. Also, if you have a game to feature, lets get together.
(call after 4:30pm most days)

See you at the next meeting and happy adventuring!

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